Cadence

Living in Step with the Spirit of God

## (Genesis 4:2-11)

Welcome all of you, I am so glad you joined us today, because there is a pattern and rhythm to everything, but when we get out of step with God’s design, we find ourselves frustrated, exhausted, and lost. And so, I want to talk with you this morning about healthy and unhealthy rhythm, also known as cadence in our lives and in the world around us, because there is a rhythm of creation in which we can see the heart of God, but it’s also hardwired into every individual. You could say it is the rhythm or cadence of community, and so we’re going to be celebrating the Lord’s Supper together, having communion with God and with one another. And it’s a time to reorient, to find the rhythm again, and so if you are watching online and you would like to celebrate the Lord’s Supper with us, this would be a great opportunity for you to grab a piece of bread, a cracker, some grape juice or some other form of juice.

Now, before we go any further, I want to give you the definition of cadence according to Merriam-Webster. Most often the dictionary describes the word cadence in reference to someone’s voice when speaking or reading. And so, Merriam-Webster defines cadence as a rhythmic sequence or flow of sounds in language. And if you’re listening to the cadence of my voice, there may be some parts that are louder, some softer, sometimes there may be a pause, and other times the tempo increases. Other definitions refer to beat, time, or a measure of rhythmical motion or activity, or a regular or repeated pattern of activity. And so, whatever you are listening to or have become involved in, no matter whether the rhythm is orderly or chaotic, healthy or unhealthy, right or wrong, I want to challenge you to consider your part, because we need to keep in step with the Spirit of God. In other words, is there anything stifling or hindering your ability to live in step with the Spirit of God?

I believe we need a healthy cadence in all aspects of life, in our relationships with others, in our church, in our community, as well as in our own lives individually. In fact, we see cadence all around us, and so we need to listen to the Holy Spirit. The Bible says it this way in Galatians chapter 5,

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

And so, we want to walk with the Spirit, keeping in step with him, so that we’re able to experience a healthy rhythm in our relationships with others, in our passion for Christ, and in our service to him in the church.

Now, last week, we were talking about a rhythm of worship and giving God thanks as we celebrated Thanksgiving. I briefly mentioned a passage in reference to Cain and Abel in that message and want to revisit that today because I believe God has more to say to us. You see, there is a rhythm or cadence that I don’t want to interrupt, and I think it’s so important that you are able to join me where God and I are having our conversations throughout the week.

As we turn to Genesis, I want to talk about chapter 4, but before we get there we must understand that there is a pattern or rhythm and this is the book of beginnings. In other words, it gives us a historical perspective of how humanity started, but it actually goes much deeper than that, revealing a rhythm or cadence in creation as God created the sun, moon, and stars to serve as signs which marked out for us the different seasons, days, and years. God built a rhythm into creation, and so the sunrise and sunset are not only beautiful and inspiring, but they are signs or signals which help us to stay in rhythm with all of God’s living creatures.

And so, if we understand the Genesis account from that context, we begin to realize the power of it, because what God started saying in Genesis continues with the same theme all the way through to Revelation. The cadence or rhythm continues, explaining, and revealing a glimpse of God’s plan for humanity. And so, if the account of the first family started talking about redemption and the blood, it’s going to be the same cadence to the end, because God was building a foundation for our redemption through the blood of his son Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

But before we read this passage in chapter 4, we need to set the framework, understanding the context, recognizing that God is not surprised by anything that has ever happened. In other words, he never reacts to a situation, because he is sovereign. The Bible says, he is the author, he wrote the script, and therefore he has determined the end before the beginning. And so, we need to understand that God’s fingerprints are all over everything that has ever happened, he either ordained it, or he allowed it. And so, he is not sitting around worrying, wondering what Satan is going to do next, because like a cosmic chess game, whenever Satan makes a move, God has already strategically planned a myriad of countermoves to win the game, and that is the privilege of being God.

It’s as we come to Genesis that we come to understand our spiritual DNA, knowing who we were created in the image of, because knowing God is knowing who your Father is. You see, it’s in the first couple chapters of Genesis that we’re introduced to God and God stands all by himself. He was God before there were any angels sing his praise. He was God before there was anybody else to tell him that he was God. And so, my prayer is that you will know that God is your beginning and your end, he is the first and the last and everything in between.

The Bible says that he is our God who spoke, he created humanity, male and female, as part of the rhythm of creation, with the intention of procreation, so that humanity would rule over all the creatures of the earth. God said,

“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule….in the image of God…. male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

And so, this was purposeful, intentional, and meaningful. And therefore, it stands to reason that we should humbly submit ourselves to the cadence that God has created, staying within the boundaries for which he has created us, so that we’re able to flourish in this life.

As we come to Genesis chapter 3, Satan has been cast out of heaven, and Jesus said,

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18).

Because he was there, the Bible says, he was with God in the beginning, through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:2-3). And so, Satan is looking for someone, something, or somewhere to have dominion. He’s been cast down to the earth, he comes to the place where God has given man dominion, and he determines to make it his goal to seduce humanity out of their rightful place.

In a last-ditch attempt to disrupt the cadence of God’s creation, to steal man’s dominion, stealing his power and authority, Satan deceives the woman. He convinces her that she should partake of the one thing that God said they should not. Genesis chapter 3, verse six says,

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Genesis 3:6).

Adam in taking the forbidden fruit from Eve, forsook God’s plan to be the provider for her, and lost something positionally in terms of authority. The Bible says,

“The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Genesis 3:7).

Just as sin separated them from God, their source of life, they separated fig leaves from their source of life. Sewing those dying fig leaves together, ashamed of their rebellion, they hid from God among the trees of the garden.

“God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9).

He came searching, reaching out to help Adam, assuming the responsibility of providing for his redemption. And so, the Lord kills an innocent animal, shedding its blood as a sacrifice for Adam’s transgression. The Bible says he made,

“Garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

In other words, God covered their sin and nakedness with the skins of an animal that gave itself as a substitute. Now, having been redeemed, Adam could live covered with these bloodied skins, but there were still consequences for their decision. God makes a judicial decision saying,

“Man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever." So, the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken” (Genesis 3:22-23).

And just as Satan had been cast out of heaven, now the first family find themselves cast out of this garden paradise, out of the place that God had provided for them to live and to flourish on the earth.

And so it is, as we come to the fourth chapter of Genesis, that they have been evicted, run out of the garden, and cast outside of its gates. This gives us a snapshot of the first family’s dysfunction, and this is why we come to church because we’re all family. We’ve all got our own brand of dysfunction, and so we all need Jesus, we need the blood of the Lamb, because we need to be set free; but if we don’t trace chapter 4 back to chapter 3 we won’t understand the problems that broke out in chapter 4.

Now we’re looking at the second-generation of this dysfunctional family, Eve is living with the guilt and the consequences of her willful rebellion. With pain she gave birth to children and what started in chapter 3 is now continuing in chapter 4. We’re introduced to the next generation in verse two with Cain and Abel and the Bible tells us,

“Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil” (Genesis 4:2).

In other words, Cain is continuing in his father’s mistakes, continuing the dysfunction, continuing in the curse, working the soil, working that which didn’t work, working the ground from which the fig leaves came.

Meanwhile, in stark contrast, Abel kept flocks, he is working with God’s solution, working with what God provided to cover his father’s mistakes. He had heard the story about the bloodied skins covering his father’s nakedness, and he understood that,

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

And so it was, on the day of worship, when they came to sacrifice, Cain and Abel came before the Lord and verse three says,

“Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock…” (Genesis 4:3-4).

In other words, Abel offered to God that which God had provided, what had been approved by God, and what had been accepted by God. But Cain offered to God what he got from the ground, that which his father had used to cover himself, that which had been rejected. And the Bible says,

“The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So, Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast” (Genesis 4:4-5).

Cain came to God on his own terms, instead of following God’s plan or seeking God’s solution. And so, he was angry because God wouldn’t accept his offering, God wouldn’t do it his way, but God had said what he had said, and he did what he did, because God is God and beside him there is no other.

Now, Abel on the other hand offered to God what God had prescribed and he found favor with God. In fact, the Bible commends him in Hebrews chapter 11 saying,

“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks…” (Hebrews 11:4).

You see, Abel understood the power of the blood. And so, by faith he gave God’s own solution to his father’s problem. It was better because he was using what God had used, what God had provided, as the Bible says,

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13).

Now, Adam had raised his sons to worship God, they had been raised to honor God by giving the first fruits, and they recognized that they weren’t going to get ahead by themselves. They knew that they needed the favor of God, but Cain came to worship on his own terms, offering up his father’s mistakes, and God hadn’t accepted the dead fig leaves before and he wasn’t going to accept dead leaves now. Recognizing that Cain’s countenance had changed, he said,

“Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? (Genesis 4:6-7).

In other words, God takes away every excuse that we will ever have. He says, “I’m not showing favoritism, I’m not being unfair, if you do what Abel did, you can get what Abel got.” And so, he tells Abel that he had just as much a chance for favor as his brother. And not only that, he could still fix it, but he warned him in verse seven saying,

“But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7).

And so, Cain had been warned, and what’s amazing is that he could have fixed this. But he leaves the presence of God, and he doesn’t go to the flock, he doesn’t go to the herd, but instead he goes to his brother and says,

“Let's go out to the field” (Genesis 4:8).

In other words, come into my territory, come out of the presence of God, come over where I am strong, and you are the most vulnerable.

He says, come out of the camp, let’s go out to the field, giving us a prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus Christ coming into the earth. In the Bible says,

“While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him” (Genesis 4:8).

This is a shadow of that which would be fulfilled in the New Testament when Jesus came into the earth. Abel’s own brother killed him, just like when Jesus came into the earth, the Bible says,

“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:10).

It had to be his own, because the Romans didn’t want to kill Jesus. And so, it was only after the high priest gave his consent that the governor gave his approval to have Jesus crucified outside of the city.

The one whom God had shown favor was murdered with a premeditated cold-blooded hatred. And so, the Lord came down and asked Cain a question, he said,

“Where is your brother Abel?” (Genesis 4:9).

The curse continues, what began in the first generation, continued into the second, and even the questions are similar. God called out to Adam, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). And now, in the next generation, “Where is your brother?”

"I don't know," Cain replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).

He refuses to acknowledge the truth, “I don’t know” he says, but maybe he shouldn’t have been so quick to answer. I understand that he doesn’t want to incriminate himself, but it’s not going to work out for him anyway because God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. And in verse 10, the Lord said to Cain,

“The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen!” (Genesis 4:10).

He says, “Listen, don’t you hear that?” “You can claim ignorance, you can plead the fifth all you want, you can cover it up, but I hear the sound.”

“Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10).

God says, “I hear the cry of your brother’s blood, I hear the sound of injustice, because you have done this thing.”

“Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand” (Genesis 4:11).

In other words, you may think you have succeeded, you may think that you won, but I hear the blood, and you are under a curse. There is a cadence in creation, there is a voice in the earth, and God has said,

“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).

The Lord says, “I’ll fix it for you, I hear the sound, it’s mine to avenge.”

You see, there’s something about the blood, in fact, as we get to the book of Hebrews, we learn that Satan did not win in this story. Abel had to die, because he is a type of Christ, and his death catapults us out of the shadows and into the reality. What starts out with Abel offering a lamb, results in Abel being offered up himself as an illustration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here in Genesis chapter three and four, God reveals to us that everything that whatever happened over the next several thousand years, the blood of bulls and goats would only be a shadow of what God was going to do for mankind. In fact, Hebrews chapter 9 says it this way,

“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:14).

And so, it was there in Egypt, that the blood that was painted on the door frame of the believer’s house, but it was just a shadow of the redemptive power of the blood of Jesus. It is here in Genesis chapter 4 that God reveals that the Lamb is only a substitute for Jesus. It is here that the Lamb is a substitute, the Lamb is Able, and the Lamb is Jesus.

It all started in the book of Genesis, sounding so much like an accident, that just maybe this was a mistake, but God never lost control of the situation. He knew what he was doing before the foundation of the world, he declared it would be the offspring of a woman, but Eve was never meant to be that woman, she was just a shadow of the woman. Later God found a woman and said,

"Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus” (Luke 1:30-31).

In other words, it happened the way it was supposed to happen, and so we can’t cry over what we had in mind, because we will never be saved by our dead leaves, by what we had in mind. We can only be saved by what God had in mind for our lives, he’s still in charge, your life is not out of control, all hope is not lost, and he said, “Listen,

"Be still and know that I am God” (Psalms 46:10).

Jesus is the one who holds the whole thing together, he is the centerpiece, the cornerstone, the Alpha and Omega, and it’s still going to come to pass. You may have thought the time was over, because things didn’t go the way you planned, maybe it’s not going to happen, but you’ve got something else deep down inside of you. The blood still speaks, there is cadence, and God is going to get the victory.

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